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Local 1990

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Local 1990's 1987 Goal: Open the Lines of Communication

If you're reading this Newsletter, you've already taken the most important step toward making our union a strong and effective campus force - you've joined. Increasing our membership numbers is a continuing priority for us as we enter the new year. But you can take further steps in our continuing effort to put more into and get more out of our union. This issue of the Newsletter highlights ways and means of improving communication between union officers and the general membership so that we can increase our contact, come to know each other better, and define ourselves as an organized, vital academic entity on the UCLA campus. We ask that every member become more actively involved with union affairs and the educational and professional issues that we collectively face. In recent weeks, Local 1990 officers have made new efforts to meet with the individuals we represent and will continue and expand this campaign to open the lines of communication. Open lines of communication will become increasingly important in 1987--especially if you're a member of Unit 18.

Needed: Department Representatives

The best way to ensure good communication between the union officers and individual departments is to formalize connections. In other words, the individual must know who to turn to with questions and comments, and that person must know where to route the inquiries. The reverse is also true: the union officers need to know at least one person in every department they represent to ensure the efficient dissemination of information and materials. Of the approximately 40 departments that employ Local 1990 members, 13 currently have Department Representatives.

We believe that it is in the interest of all concerned to increase the number of active Department Representatives, for several reasons. Department Representatives do valuable recruiting work. They know who has joined the union and who has never been contacted and invited to join. Representatives also keep the union in touch with departmental issues of general concern. They help the union to deal with individual cases where potential or actual reappointment or other contractual matters have come into question. Representatives serve as liaisons between lecturers and union officers, so that issues related to the major review or to the grievance process can be addressed.

If you are interested in becoming a Department Representative, contact Susan Griffin at x68606. A list of committed Representatives will appear in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Union Visitors

Union officers are interested in meeting with members and potential members of Local 1990. Marde Gregory, Susan Griffin, and Gail Livings recently met with lecturers on the faculty of Nursing to answer questions on the review process. They have scheduled more visits to different departments over the course of the next two quarters. If you would like the officers to talk with you and your departmental colleagues, contact Susan or Gail, x68606 or x51313.

The Major Review and the Threat of Precautionary Non-Reappointment

The Unit 18 Memo of Understanding with the University of California guarantees non-Senate faculty the right to a major review upon reaching their sixth year of employment. We have received disturbing reports from several departments, however, that the UCLA administration is encouraging department heads to "consider carefully" the reappointment of Unit 18 members who are close to the major review. That means some lecturers could be terminated before they become eligible for the major review and the 3 year contracts that will follow positive evaluations.

Local 1990 is committed to filing grievances against the University if it does in fact pursue any policy of capricious termination or terminations clearly intended to deprive Unit 18 members of the extensive evaluation procedure outlined in our contract.

Individual members can take several steps to protect themselves and help prevent this threat from becoming a reality. First, ensure clear and swift communication between you and the union by having a Department Representative. This direct contact with union officers can ensure the proper interpretation of the review process as the contract details it and can help prevent abuses from occurring. Next, and most important, be sure that you have officially applied for your position. If you have not applied for reappointment, the University is not bound to consider you for the position. Finally, contact union officers if your department makes changes in its hiring policy that seem to violate the terms of our contract. The issue of national searches, a criterion newly adopted by the University as a requirement in non-Senate faculty hiring, is an example of the kind of issue the union needs to be apprised of so it can monitor the administration's interpretation of the contract's reappointment criteria.

Candidates for the Major Review

Lecturers who expect to have their major review within the next few years may want to meet with union officers to review the contract guidelines. It's also an opportunity to discuss how to prepare for the review. Call Tom Miller, Marde Gregory, or any of the other union officers.

(Labor Donated)

Part-Time Faculty Members Deserve a Break From UC

By MICHAEL SCHWALBE

Two recent study commission reports, one by a group of UC faculty members led by Berkeley sociologist Neil Smelser and another by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, agree that the quality of undergraduate education in this country is diminishing. Both cite as reasons the lack of career rewards for good teaching, chronic underfunding of core liberal-arts areas and creeping vocationalism. But neither report adequately confronts an equally serious factor: the ways in which universities as employers treat part-time and temporary faculty members who do a large share of the undergraduate teaching.

This is an especially serious yet underplayed issue in the University of California system, where job insecurity, excessive course loads and lack of say in making education policy have made it difficult for part-time and temporary faculty members, who teach the majority of lower-division courses, to do their best work.

Lack of job security has been the worst problem. Until recently no formal guidelines existed for evaluating the work of part-time and temporary faculty members. Many found their job security depending more on ability to get along with a department chairman than on ability to teach. In the absence of proper evaluations it was not always the best teachers who were rewarded with continued employment.

Job security has also been undermined by administrators wanting to preserve "flexibility" in budgeting and scheduling by hiring large numbers of lecturers on a course-by-course basis—sometimes immediately before the start of a term, leaving them little time for preparation.

The tenuous nature of this kind of academic employment forces many lecturers to take positions at several colleges. These "freeway flyers," as they sometimes call themselves, may be teaching at as many as three institutions and, in some cases, teaching as many courses in one term as a regular UC faculty member teaches in a year. They do this to earn enough to get through periods of unemployment and to stay in favor with alternative employers. The quality of instruction can only suffer when part-time and temporary faculty members must stretch themselves so thin.

In some instances full-time course loads for lecturers have been only slightly greater than full-time loads for regular faculty members. This is reasonable, since non-senate faculty members are not subject to the publishing demands placed on regular faculty members. In other cases, however, full-time loads for lecturers have been nearly double those for regular faculty members. This is not only unreasonable, it is also exploitative and shameful.

Problems with excessive course loads developed in part because part-time and temporary faculty members have had no voice within the bureaucratic structure of the university. Consequently, their concerns have seldom been seriously discussed, let alone adequately addressed. It seems ironic in light of this that the Carnegie Foundation report calls for drawing undergraduates into university governance; a large segment of the faculty ought to be included in governance first.

Because of these problems, this group of faculty members—collectively known as "non-senate" faculty because of exclusion from the academic senate—has organized to bargain collectively with the university on a systemwide basis. Last spring, after two years of talks, the University Council-American Federation of Teachers and the University of California administration signed the first faculty labor contract in the history of the UC system.

The agreement represents the first concrete step taken in the UC system to solve problems of non-senate faculty members. It provides for job security thorough evaluations of teaching performance and limitations on course loads. And in an informal addendum to the contract the university has agreed to establish committees to ensure non-senate faculty members a voice in policy-making on each UC campus.

University administrators, department heads and regular faculty members should heed that voice now. To make proposals for improving the quality of undergraduate education without considering the special problems of non-senate faculty members is unrealistic. It is just as unrealistic, and ultimately unproductive, to do as some administrators would like—deny the role of the union in resolving these problems.

Significant improvements in the quality of undergraduate education may now depend more on what occurs at the bargaining table than in the ivied towers occupied by the faculty elites who are appointed to study commissions. What will be most important is the university's instruction by improving the working conditions of those who are deeply committed to doing it.

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